TOWER OF SHADOWS

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TOWER OF SHADOWS™

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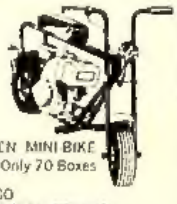
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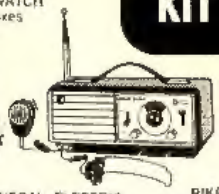
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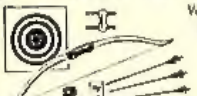
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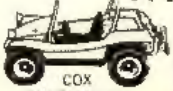
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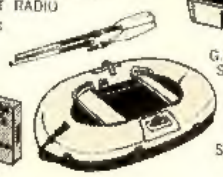
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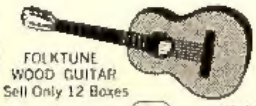
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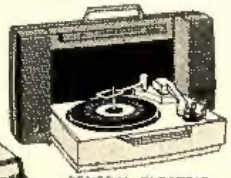
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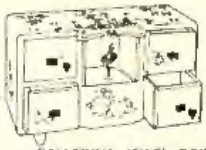
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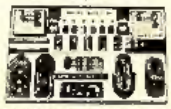
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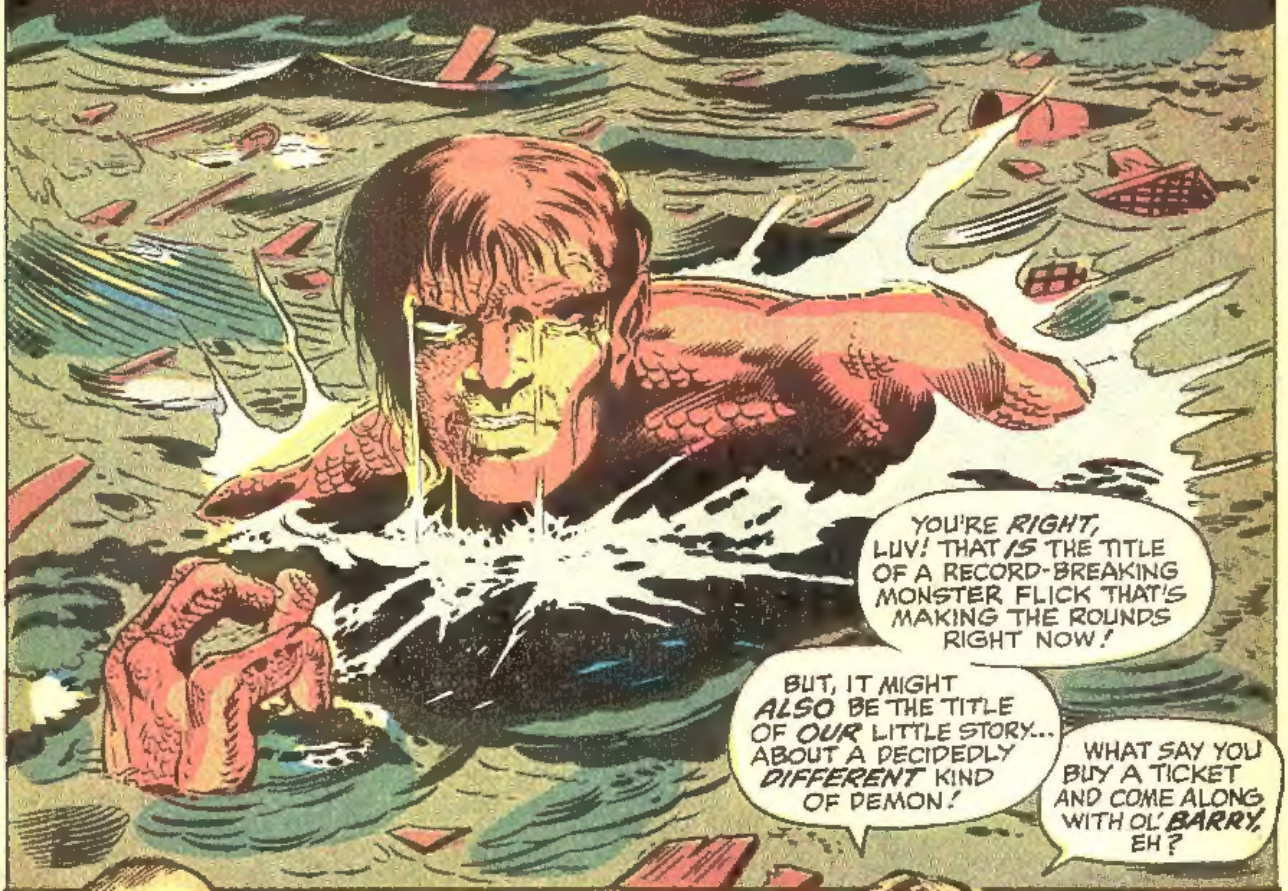

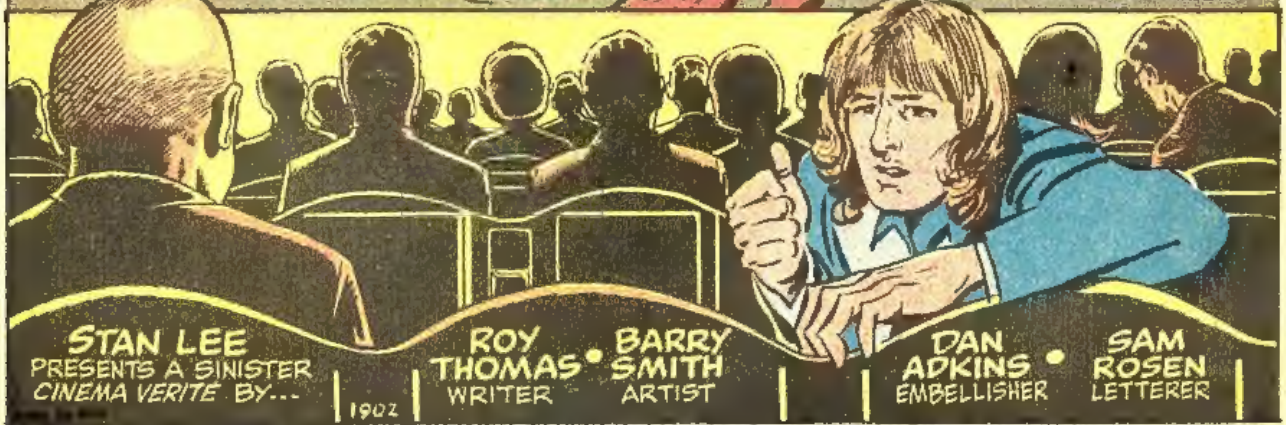

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1902

ROY THOMAS • BARRY SMITH
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JASON ROLAND WAS THE HOTTEST PROPERTY IN HOLLYWOOD... AND HE KNEW IT!

IS IT TRUE, MR. ROLAND, YOU'VE UPPED YOUR PRICE TO A MILLION PER MOVIE?

SUPPLY AND DEMAND, CHARLIE!

DON'T YOU READ VARIETY, BOYS?

JASE'S LAST HORROR PIC BROKE ALL RECORDS!

TELL 'EM, STELLA!

SAY... WHAT'S THE SECRET OF THAT FANTASTIC MAKEUP YOU WEAR, MR. ROLAND?

SORRY, KIDDIES... THAT'LL HAVE TO STAY MY LITTLE TRADE SECRET!

BESIDES, I'M GIVING UP PLAYING MONSTERS! MY NEXT PICTURE I PLAY STRAIGHT!

JASE! YOU NEVER TOLD ME...!

YOU NEVER ASKED ME, BABY!

NOW RUN ALONG, PEOPLE... 'CAUSE WE'RE SHOOTING THE FINAL SCENES TOMORROW...

...AND I WANT TO LOOK GOOD FOR MY FAREWELL APPEARANCE AS A MOVIE MONSTER!

NEXT YEAR, YOU'LL ALL BE INTERVIEWING JASON ROLAND... MATINEE IDOL!

THERE! THAT OUGHT TO... YOU!

I TOLD YOU NEVER TO COME HERE! WHAT IF...?

DON'T WORRY, MY DEAR MR. ROLAND! NO ONE SAW ME ENTER!

NO ONE ELSE WILL LEARN THAT IT IS MY GENIUS THAT HAS MADE YOU A STAR... NOT YOUR OWN!

I MERELY CAME TO REMIND YOU THAT... TOMORROW ...I SHALL COLLECT MY DEBT!

DEBT? WHY YOU SAWED-OFF LITTLE FOOL!

I DIDN'T SIGN ANYTHING... SO YOU CAN JUST GET OUT!

NOW, NOW, MR. ROLAND...

I SAID GET OUT!!

YES, JASON ROLAND... I SHALL LEAVE, ALL RIGHT!

STILL, IF YOU BELIEVE A MERE LEGAL TECHNICALITY WILL STOP ME FROM COLLECTING MY RIGHTFUL DEBT...

YOU HAVE MUCH TO LEARN ABOUT THE ONE WITH WHOM YOU DEAL!

...THAT MISERABLE, MISSHAPEN SCHEMER!

I WAS A NOBODY WHEN I MET HIM... A TWO-BIT EXTRA...

YET, WITHOUT HIM, I'D BE NOTHING... AND I KNOW IT!

AND WITHOUT HIM, I'D STILL BE A NOBODY WALLOWING IN THE MUD AND THE MIRE!

FOR, THOUGH NO ONE KNOWS IT, IT'S HIS MAKEUP THAT HAS MADE ME HOLLYWOOD'S REIGNING MONSTER KING!

THEY CALL ME THE GREATEST SINCE LON CHANEY... WHAT A LAUGH!

I COULDN'T PAINT MY TOENAILS WITHOUT HIS HELP!

WELL, AFTER TOMORROW, I'LL NEVER HAVE TO SEE HIM AGAIN!

NEVER!

NEXT MORNING, THE DAWN BREAKS ON THE FINAL DAY OF FILMING...!

THOSE NIMBLE FINGERS... THAT SPECIAL MAKEUP WHICH YOU APPLY AND REMOVE EACH DAY...

WHO ARE YOU, MAN? WHERE DO YOU COME FROM??

I HAVE ANSWERED THAT QUESTION BEFORE, ROLAND!

YOU DID NOT LIKE MY ANSWER THEN... AND YOU WOULD NOT LIKE IT NOW!

OH YES... YOU'RE AN EMISSARY OF THE DEVIL, YOU ONCE TOLD ME!

YOU DIDN'T THINK I BELIEVED THAT ROT, DID YOU?

SURE I PROMISED YOU ANY ONE THING YOU WANTED WHEN I BECAME FAMOUS... BUT WE ONLY SHOOK ON IT, REMEMBER?

AND WHAT WAS THAT ONE THING, FOOL? YOU NEVER SAID!

ONLY... YOUR SOUL!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

JIM DRISCOLL IN *The Race to Danger*

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THEY'RE TIGHT!

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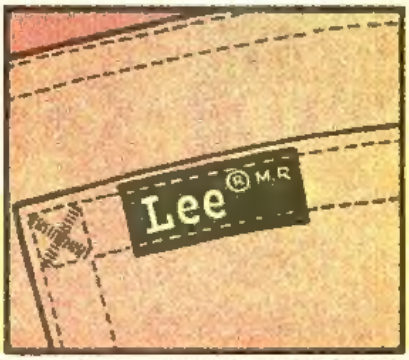

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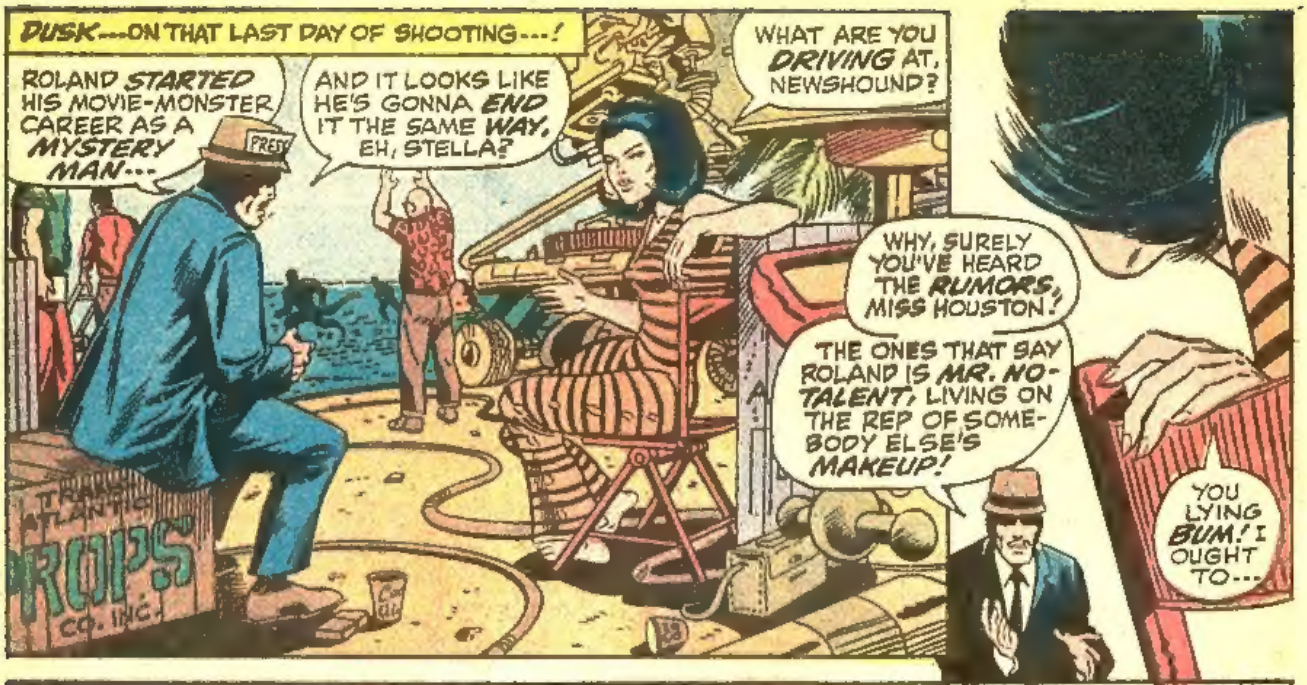
WHAT??
THIS TIME YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR WITH YOUR GAME, YOU LITTLE SWINE! WITH THESE HANDS, I OUGHT TO---
LET--- GO OF ME--- MISTER ROLAND!
I AM ONLY AN EMISSARY--- I SAY WHAT I WAS TOLD!
BUT, MY MASTER MEANS TO HAVE YOUR SOUL--- ONE WAY OR ANOTHER!
THEN, YOUR MASTER--- WHETHER MAN OR DEVIL--- IS A BLITHERING FOOL!
BECAUSE WE ONLY SHOOK HANDS ON OUR DEAL--- I NEVER SIGNED ANYTH---
WHAT AM I SAYING? NEXT THING, YOU'LL HAVE ME BELIEVING ALL THAT BUNK YOU'RE SPOUTING!
FOR THE FINAL TIME--- GET OUT!
TODAY IS MY FINAL PERFORMANCE AS A MOVIE MONSTER--- AND I DON'T NEED YOU ANY LONGER!
IF YOU EVER CROSS MY PATH AGAIN--- I SWEAR THAT I'LL KILL YOU!
THEN--- OUR PATHS WON'T CROSS AGAIN, MR. ROLAND---
NO, NEVER AGAIN---!
4


DUSK---ON THAT LAST DAY OF SHOOTING---!
ROLAND STARTED HIS MOVIE-MONSTER CAREER AS A MYSTERY MAN---
AND IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S GONNA END IT THE SAME WAY, EH, STELLA?
WHAT ARE YOU DRIVING AT, NEWSHOUND?
WHY, SURELY YOU'VE HEARD THE RUMORS, MISS HOUSTON!
THE ONES THAT SAY ROLAND IS MR. NO-TALENT, LIVING ON THE REP OF SOMEBODY ELSE'S MAKEUP!
YOU LYING BUM! I OUGHT TO---
ROP'S CO. INC.

CUT!
THAT'S A TAKE!
AND SO IS HOLLYWOOD... MINE FOR THE TAKING!
WHAT'S WRONG, BABY? STEP ON A HORNET?
THIS CREEP SAYS YOU'RE A FAKE, JASE... THAT'S ALL!
I DIDN'T SAY HE WAS A FAKE, LADY!
BUT THERE'S RUMORS FLOATING AROUND, ROLAND, THAT YOU DON'T DO YOUR OWN MONSTER MAKEUP!

RUMORS LIKE THAT CAN BE BAD FOR A GUY'S IMAGE!
SO, I'D BETTER SCOTCH 'EM-- ONCE AND FOR ALL!
NOW, PAL... SINCE YOU JUST RETIRED AS THE NEW KARLOFF?

SIMPLE, CHARLIE! I'M GOING INTO MY DRESSING ROOM THERE---
AND WHEN I COME OUT, YOUR PHOTOG CAN GET A SHOT OF ME WITH MY MAKEUP HALF ON AND HALF OFF!
WHAT'S MORE, I'LL EXPLAIN ALL MY LITTLE SECRETS FOR THAT SCANDAL SHEET OF YOURS! OKAY?

SOUNDS FAIR ENOUGH TO ME, STAR-MAN!
THE MORNING EDITIONS WILL EAT THIS UP!
HOW ABOUT A KISS, BABY... FOR THE SHUTTERBUGS?
IN THAT GET-UP? ARE YOU KIDDING?
TAKE IT OFF... AND THEN WE MAKE LIKE LOVEBIRDS!

THEN, IN THE DARK SECLUSION OF HIS DRESSING ROOM---
SHOULD BE EASY TO FAKE MY WAY THRU AN EXPLANATION OF MY "MAKEUP TECHNIQUES"!
AND SINCE I'M NEVER GONNA PUT IT ON AGAIN---
WHO'LL EVER BE ABLE TO PROVE THAT I'M LYING?

ALL I'VE GOT TO DO IS PEEL OFF THIS GUNK, AND---
HMMM--- THIS CREAM ISN'T DOING ANY GOOD!

IN FACT--- NOTHING'S DOING ANY GOOD!
THIS STUFF IS STICKING TO ME--- LIKE A SECOND SKIN!
OH NO! NOOOOO!!

DID YOU HEAR SOME KIND OF CRY FROM INSIDE, MISS HOUSTON?
I--I THOUGHT SO--- BUT I MUST BE WRONG!
BECAUSE, WHAT I HEARD---DIDN'T EVEN SOUND HUMAN!

IT--WON'T-- COME--OFF--!!

THEN--- THAT WAS THE LITTLE GUY'S SECRET!
HE--HE DIDN'T JUST MAKE ME UP--HE TURNED ME INTO WHATEVER MONSTER I WAS PLAYING!
BUT, ONLY HE COULD CHANGE ME BACK---AND I KICKED HIM OUT!

HE SAID--- THE DEVIL WANTED ME---ONE WAY OR ANOTHER!
NOW...HE'S GOT ME--- FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!

MR. ROLAND?
WE'RE WAITING, JASON--!
AND THEY WAITED FOR A LONG, LONG TIME... BEFORE THEY FINALLY CUT FOR COFFEE...!

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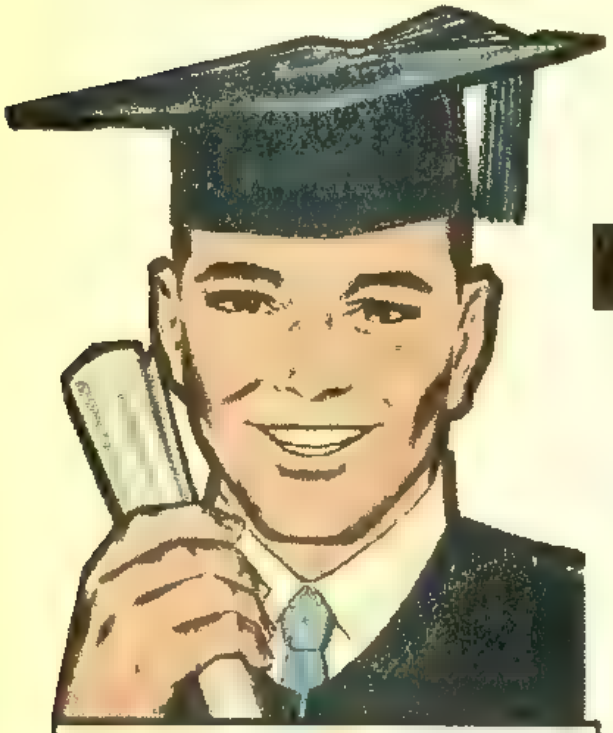

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FLIGHT INTO FEAR!

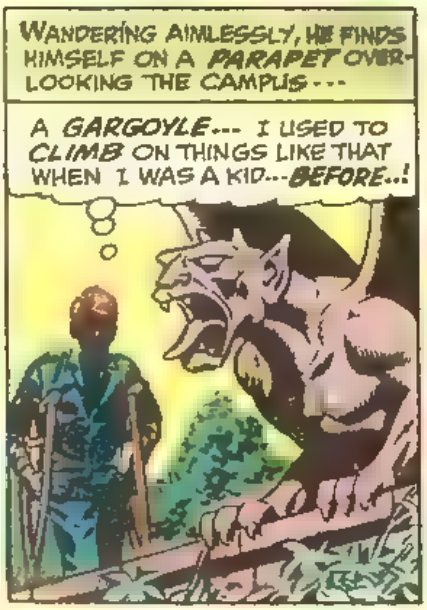
GREETINGS, WALLY WOOD HERE!

DID YOU KNOW THAT THERE ARE *OTHER* WORLDS THAT CO-EXIST WITH OURS--- THAT THERE ARE *PEOPLE* PASSING THRU YOU RIGHT NOW, EXISTING ON ANOTHER *PLANE*--- OR, IF YOU PREFER, IN ANOTHER *DIMENSION!?*

OCCASIONALLY, THERE IS A *DOOR-WAY* BETWEEN THOSE WORLDS AND OURS---

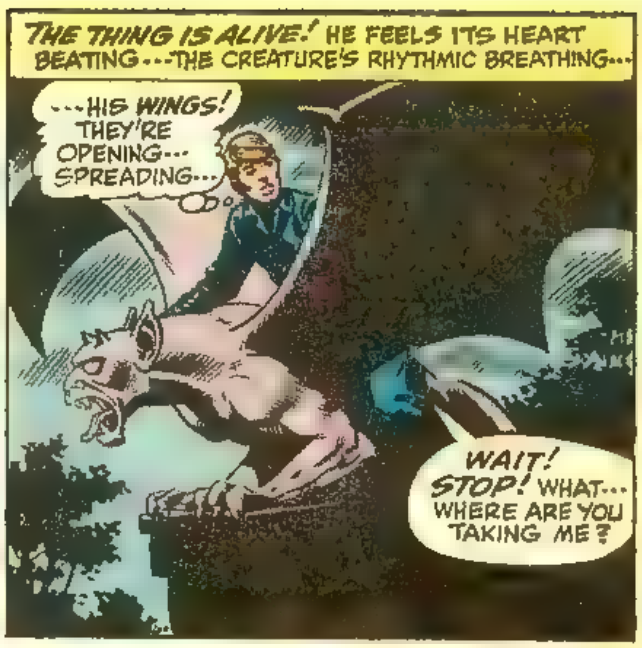
AND, EVEN *MORE* OCCASIONALLY--- THERE IS SOMEONE WHO PASSES *THRU* THAT DOORWAY--- INTO WEIRD WORLDS THAT MAN WAS NEVER MEANT TO LOOK UPON!!

HIS NAME WAS *JOHNNY*, AND HE WAS JUST AN AVERAGE KID--- EXCEPT FOR THE ACCIDENT THAT HAD COST HIM THE USE OF HIS *LEGS!* IF HE HAD ONE OUTSTANDING QUALITY, IT WAS *COURAGE*--- A QUIET STRENGTH THAT WAS SOON TO BE PUT TO THE TEST---!



IT SEEMS AS IF ONLY A MOMENT HAS PASSED, BUT---
I MUST HAVE DOZED OFF--- IT'S NIGHT!

THEN, HE REALIZES WHAT IT WAS THAT AWAKENED HIM---
IT CAN'T BE! THE GARGOYLE...
IT'S GETTING WARM!

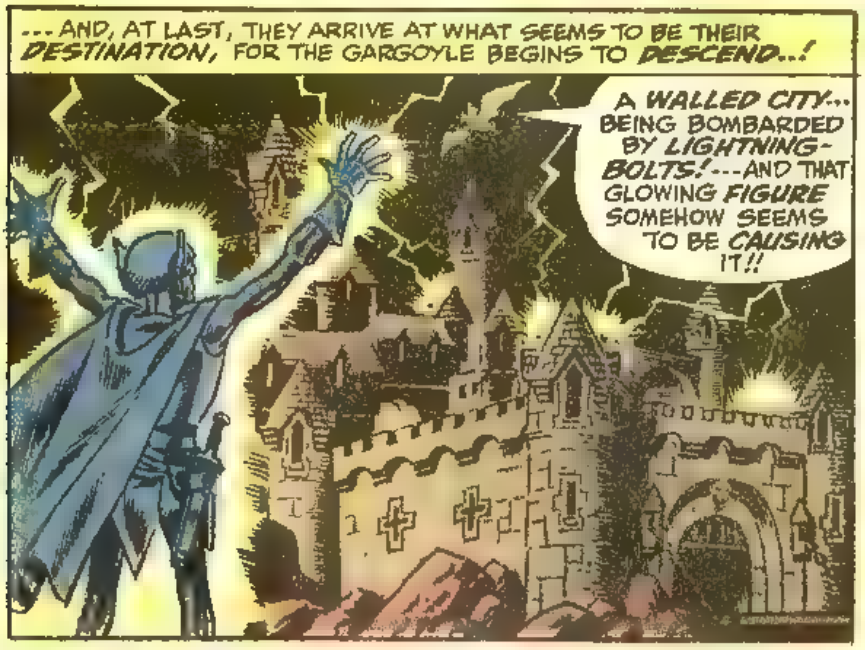

THE THING IS ALIVE! HE FEELS ITS HEART BEATING---THE CREATURE'S RHYTHMIC BREATHING---
---HIS WINGS! THEY'RE OPENING--- SPREADING---
WAIT! STOP! WHAT--- WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME?

---AND THEY ARE AIR-BORNE, THE GREAT LEATHERY WINGS CARRYING THEM HIGHER AND HIGHER, AT EVER-INCREASING SPEED---
HANG ON, JON-NEEE---
WHAT--!? WHO SAID THAT?

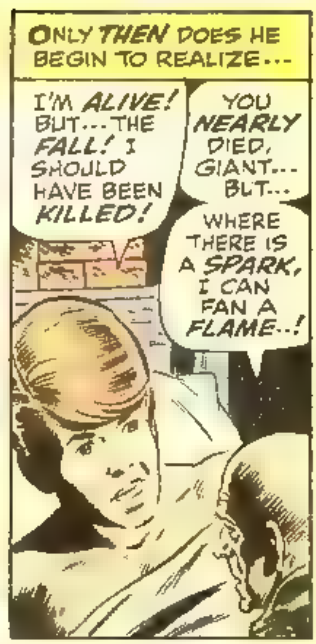
AHEAD, A DARKER SPOT APPEARS IN THE DARK SKY, A HOLE IN THE VERY FABRIC OF REALITY---
I DID--- I AM YOUR GUIDE AS WELL AS YOUR STEED!
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME?

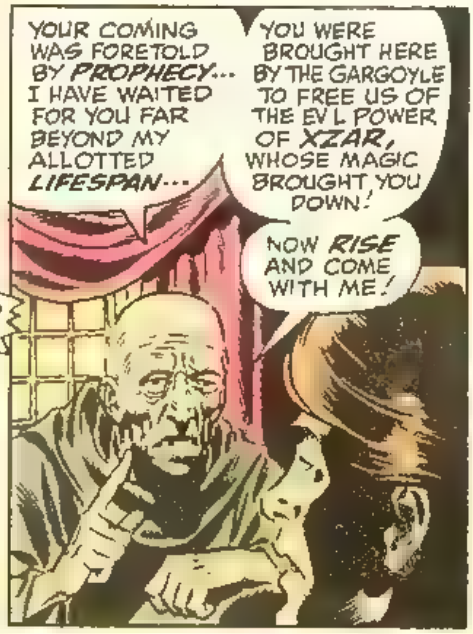
IT GROWS ALARMINGLY AS THEY PLUNGE INTO IT, DRAWN NOW BY AIR RUSHING INTO THE VOID---
TO THE OTHER SIDE OF HERE---
TO THE LAND WHERE DREAMS COME TRUE...

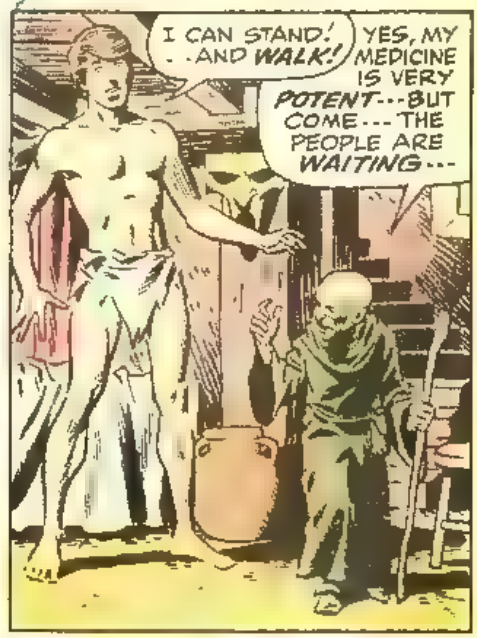
AND SUDDENLY, IT IS OVER, AND THEY ARE SOARING THROUGH A STRANGE SKY OVER AN ALIEN TERRAIN---
---SOMETIMES NIGHTMARES!

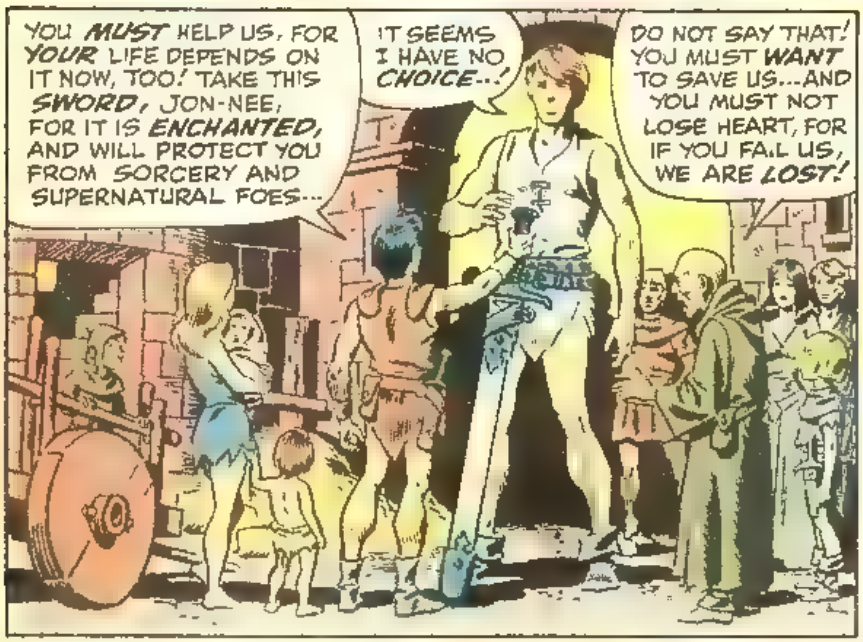

---AND, AT LAST, THEY ARRIVE AT WHAT SEEMS TO BE THEIR DESTINATION, FOR THE GARGOYLE BEGINS TO DESCEND..!
A WALLED CITY... BEING BOMBARDED BY LIGHTNING-BOLTS!---AND THAT GLOWING FIGURE SOMEHOW SEEMS TO BE CAUSING IT!!

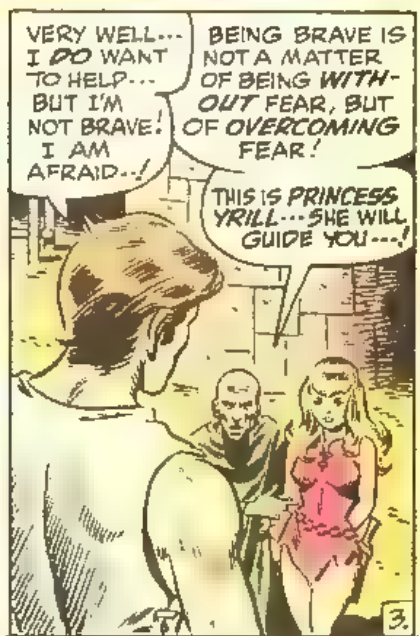
THEN--- DISASTER STRIKES!!
OH NO! NOW WE'RE HIT--!!











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AND SO THEY BEGIN THEIR QUEST--THE YOUNG GIANT, AND THE TINY PRINCESS---

BUT WHY DO YOU WANT TO GO?

I DO NOT WANT TO---

---BUT SOMEONE MUST, AND I HAVE A VERY SPECIAL REASON TO HATE XZAR---

---HE KILLED MY FATHER, THE KING---

---AND HE STOLE THE "EYE OF ETERNITY," THE MOST POTENT MAGIC IN THE WORLD... HE GETS MOST OF HIS POWER FROM IT!

THEN WE MUST TRY TO GET IT BACK--

HEY! IT'S GETTING DARK!

IT'S STILL MID-DAY--- THE SUN ISN'T GOING DOWN---IT'S GOING OUT! FADING---

THAT IS BECAUSE WE ARE IN THE REALM OF XZAR---IT IS ALWAYS DARK HERE.

SUDDENLY, AS THEY NEAR THE SINISTER CASTLE OF XZAR---

FOOLS! YOU DARE!?

XZAR!

---AND THAT JEWEL ON HIS CHEST MUST BE THE "EYE OF ETERNITY"!

THEN, WITH A BLINDING FLASH AND A DEAFENING BLAST---

THE SWORD! IT IS PROTECTING US!

THE ATTACK ENDS AS SUDDENLY AS IT BEGAN, AND THEY SEE---

YOU THINK YOU ARE SAFE? THAT WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING!

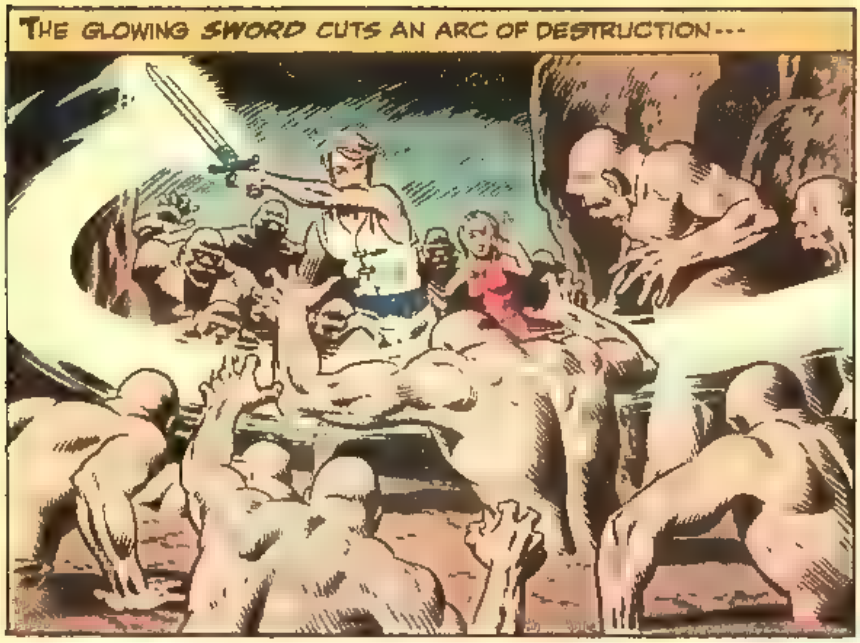
HEY! HE'S DISAPPEARING! NOW WHAT?

LOOK! UNDER OUR FEET--- EYES!

EYES IN THE GROUND!

RUN! FORWARD--- THROUGH THEM!

MONSTROUS BODIES BEGIN TO EMERGE FROM THE EARTH---


THE GLOWING SWORD CUTS AN ARC OF DESTRUCTION---

---AND THEN THEY ARE IN THE CLEAR, ONLY TO FIND---
MY HANDS! I'M--- CHANGING---
JON-NEE! WHAT IS THE MATTER?

MY FACE... IT FEELS LIKE... UGH!
OH, JON-NEE! HE HAS PUT A CURSE ON YOU!

PRINCESS! OH, NO! NOT YOU, TOO!
WHY--- WHAT IS IT? WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME?

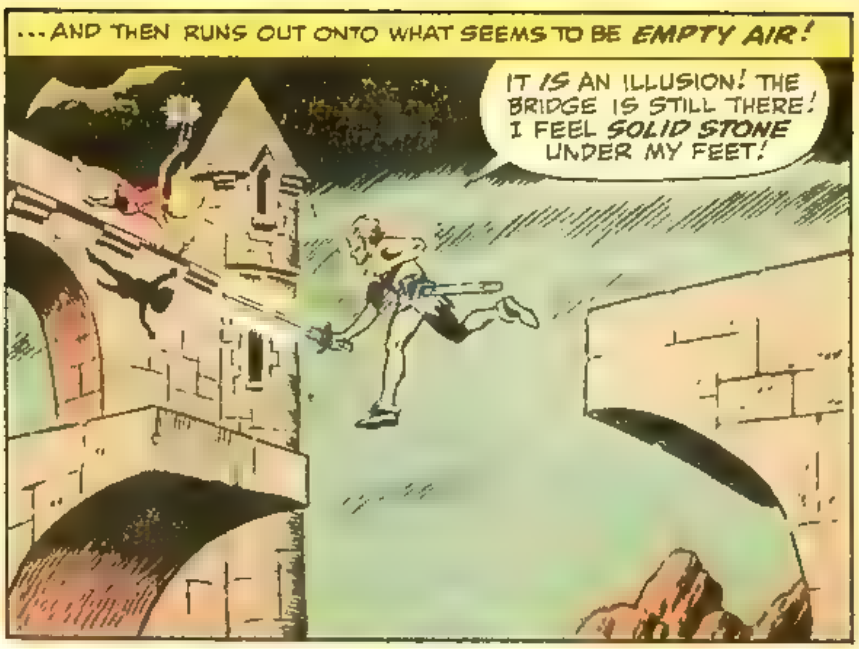
JOHNNY'S HORRIFIED EXPRESSION ANSWERS HER QUESTION---
YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY IT!

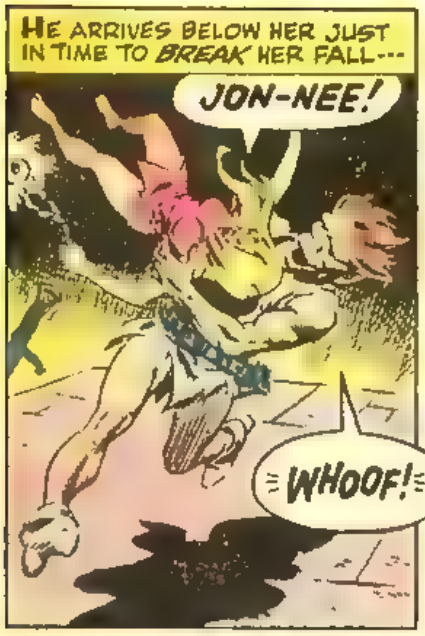
WAIT! COME BACK! I CAN'T PROTECT YOU IF YOU RUN!
DON'T! DON'T TRY TO STOP ME--- I'D RATHER BE DEAD!

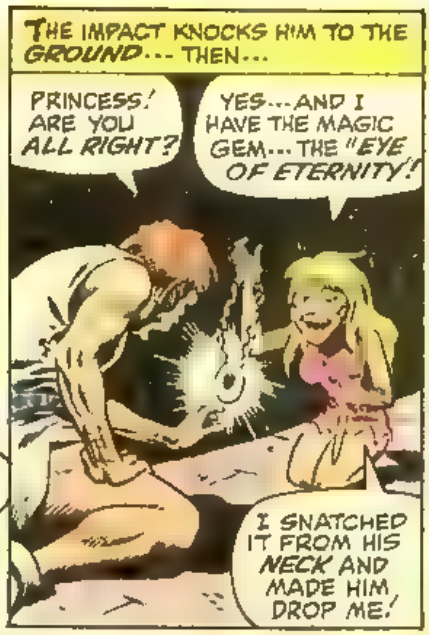
A FLYING MONSTROSITY WITH THE FACE OF XZAR SWOOPS---
HAHA
JON-NEEE!

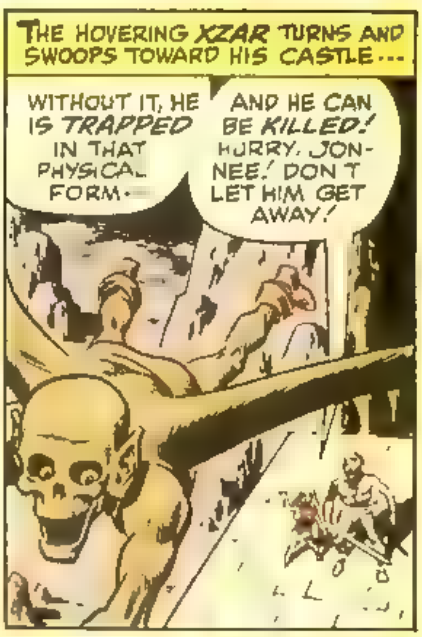
---AND CARRIES THE PRINCESS OFF TOWARD HIS CASTLE---
JON-NEE! OH! HELP ME.

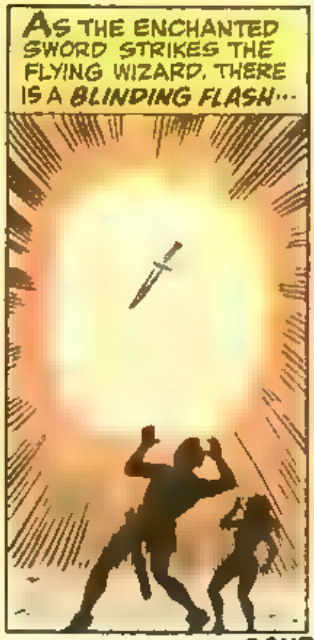
HE IS AFRAID OF ME... RATHER, OF THE SWORD... OR HE WOULDN'T RESORT TO TRICKERY AND ILLUSION---
UH OH! A SECTION OF THE BRIDGE COLLAPSED!











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WITH THE DEATH OF XZAR, ALL HIS ENCHANTMENTS ARE *LIFTED*, AND HIS CASTLE FALLS TO *DUST!*

--*YES*, PRINCESS! YOU ARE *BEAUTIFUL!* AGAIN!

SO ARE *YOU*, JON-NEE!

LET US GO *HOME!*

ONE *FURTHER* SURPRISE AWAITS YOU, PRINCESS! ARE YOU READY?

FATHER! OH, YOU'RE *ALIVE!*

THE WIZARD PUT THE CURSE OF THE *LIVING DEATH* ON ME, CHILD... AND YOU TWO *SAVED* ME! NAME YOUR REWARD, JON-NEE ...AND STAY WITH US! BE OUR GOOD GIANT!

YES, JON-NEE. *PLEASE!* FATHER WILL GIVE YOU A *KING-DOM!*

NO, I CAN'T... I'M HOMESICK FOR MY *OWN* WORLD... MY FRIENDS... YOU *UNDERSTAND*, DON'T YOU?

YES, I DO... BUT STAY AND CELEBRATE WITH US -- WE WILL HAVE A *GARGOYLE* AT YOUR DISPOSAL WHENEVER YOU ARE READY...!

ON THE FLIGHT BACK...

I'M SO *SLEEPY*... SO VERY SLEEPY...

THEY FOUND HIM IN THE *MORNING*, SLEEPING ON THE BACK OF THE GARGOYLE --

JOHNNY! WAKE UP! WHAT ARE YOU *DOING* HERE?

YAWN HMM... GEE, I HAD THE *STRANGEST DREAM*...

HE TOLD THEM ALL ABOUT HIS "DREAM"... AND *LEFT* THEM, DEEP IN THOUGHT...

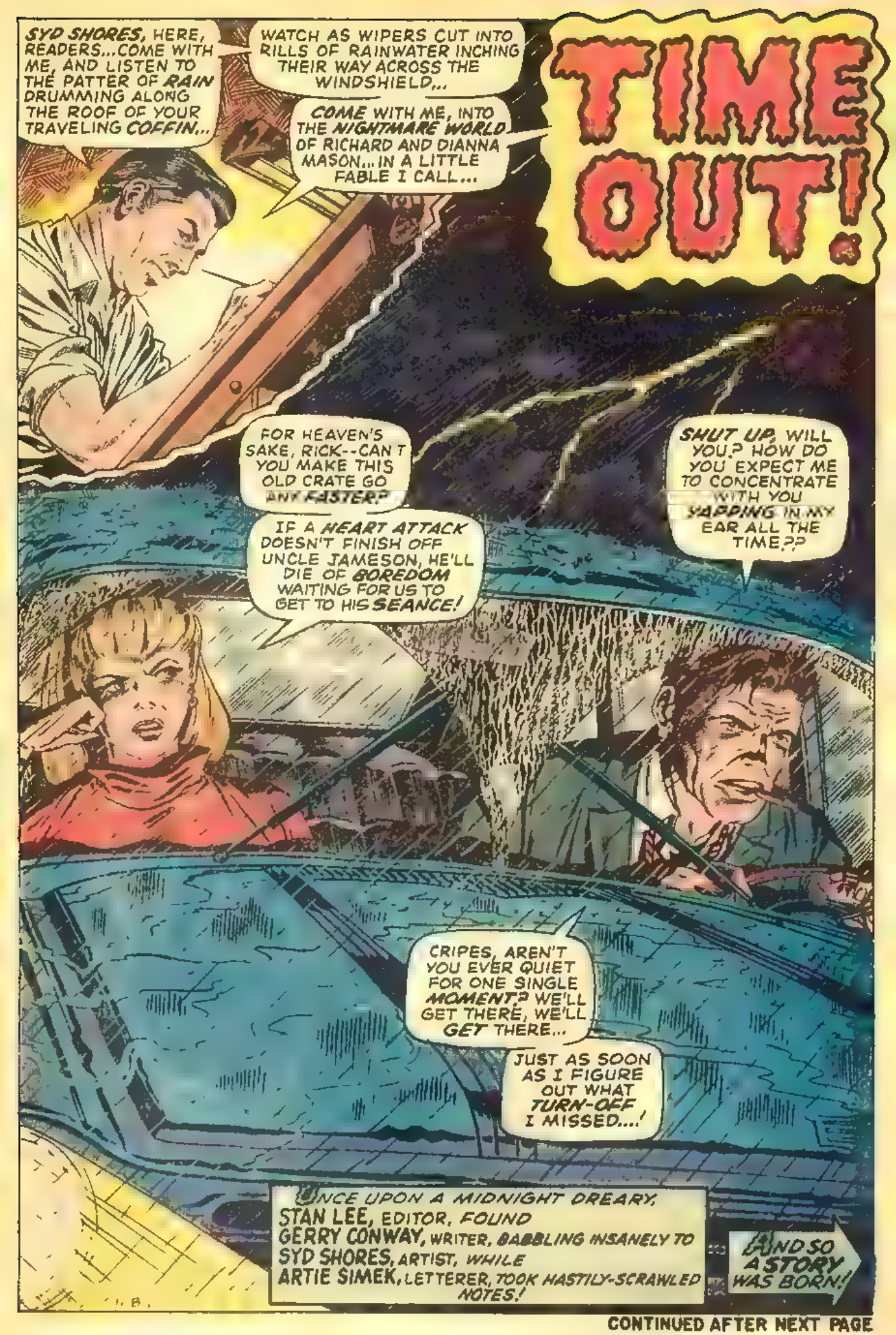
THEN IT *REGISTERED*...

...HE WALKED AWAY!

--*WALKED!*

NO ONE NOTICED THAT IT WAS NOT THE *SAME* GARGOYLE THAT HAD BEEN THERE THE *PREVIOUS* DAY...

BUT THEN... WHO REALLY LOOKS AT *GARGOYLES?*



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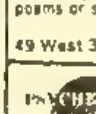

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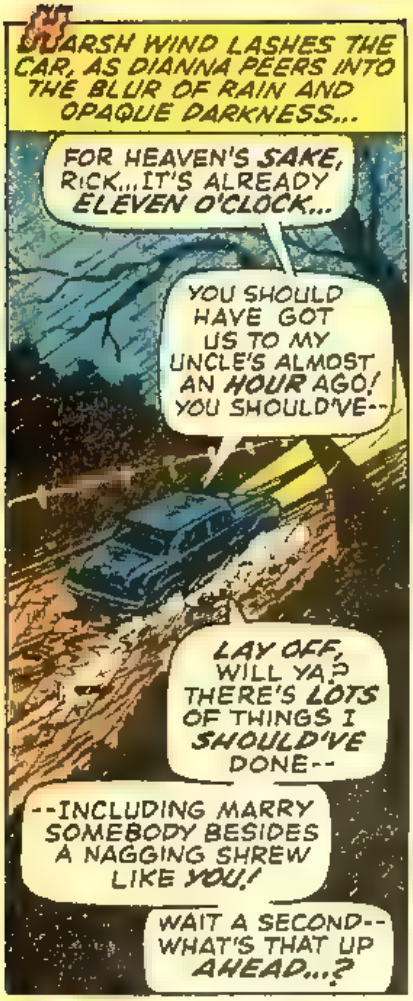
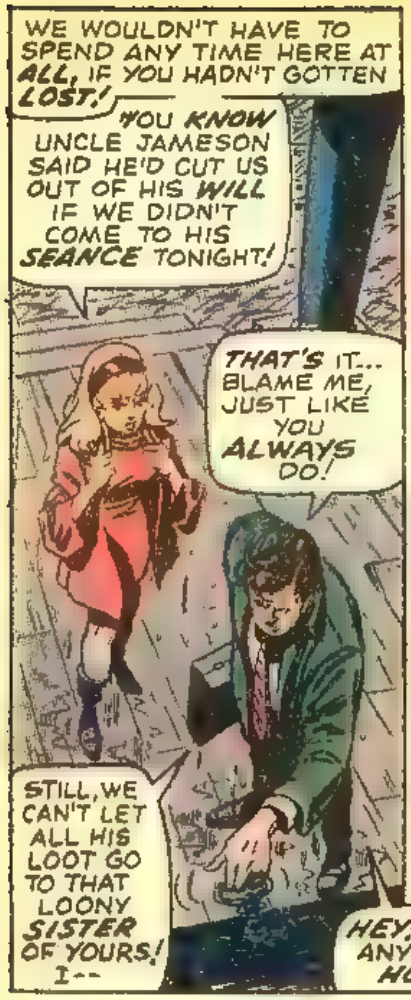

HARSH WIND LASHES THE CAR, AS DIANNA PEERS INTO THE BLUR OF RAIN AND OPAQUE DARKNESS...
FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, RICK...IT'S ALREADY ELEVEN O'CLOCK...
YOU SHOULD HAVE GOT US TO MY UNCLE'S ALMOST AN HOUR AGO! YOU SHOULD'VE--
LAY OFF, WILL YA? THERE'S LOTS OF THINGS I SHOULD'VE DONE--
--INCLUDING MARRY SOMEBODY BESIDES A NAGGING SHREW LIKE YOU!
WAIT A SECOND--WHAT'S THAT UP AHEAD...?

"LODGINGS"!
SIGN MUST HAVE BEEN TORN DOWN BY THE STORM...
WE MIGHT AS WELL HOLE UP AWAY FROM THIS STORM--DOESN'T LOOK AS IF WE'LL GET TO YOUR UNCLE'S PLACE TONIGHT!
LODGINGS

MUTED BY THE RAIN, THE ROAR OF THE CAR'S ENGINE ADDS A STACCATO BACKGROUND TO DIANNA'S INNERMOST THOUGHTS...
WHAT HAPPENED TO US? WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MAN I ONCE KNEW--THE MAN I MARRIED??
HE'S CHANGED...WE'VE BOTH CHANGED--WHATEVER LOVE WE ONCE SHARED...
...IS DEAD!

AND THEN, A FLASH OF LIGHTNING--AND FRAMED AGAINST THE STARK, RAIN-STREAKED SKY...THE HOUSE!
THERE'S OUR LITTLE HOME FOR THE NIGHT, BIG-MOUTH!

RICK--THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG... I LIVED NEAR HERE FOR TEN YEARS--AND NEVER KNEW OF ANY HOUSE LIKE--THIS!
I--I DON'T LIKE IT, RICK... I DON'T!
WELL, IT'S BETTER'N NOTHING, THAT'S FOR SURE... BESIDES, IT'S ONLY FOR A FEW HOURS
IT ISN'T AS THOUGH WE WERE PLANNING TO SPEND THE REST OF OUR LIVES IN THE PLACE!



WELL, LET'S SEE WHAT'S IN--

HOLY CROW!

LOOK AT THAT FUNNY CIRCLE-- THAT GLOBE-- ALL THAT MYSTICAL JUNK!

IT REMINDS ME OF ALL THAT TRIPE YOUR NUTTY UNCLE DABBLES IN!

WHAT'S GOIN' ON HERE, ANYWAY?

RICK! RICK-- I--I'M AFRAID!

WE DON'T-- BELONG HERE! I CAN FEEL IT-- PLEASE, RICK--

LET'S GO BACK TO THE CAR, RICK! I'M FRIGHTENED!

YOU'RE TALKIN' CRAZY, DIANNA!

YOU'D BE AFRAID OF YOUR OWN-- WHAT'S THAT!?

IT'S--LAUGHTER, YOU FOOL! HOLLOW, MOCKING LAUGHTER!

BUT, WHERE'S IT COMING FROM?

IT'S THE WIND, BLAST IT!

JUST THE WIND-- RATTLING THRU THESE ROTTING WALLS, THAT'S ALL!

YEAH-- THAT'S ALL!

HAAAHAAHAAHAAHAA

STILL, THIS PLACE IS STARTIN' TO GIVE ME THE CREEPS, TOO, SO MAYBE WE BETTER--

HUH? WHAT THE DEVIL--?

WH-WHAT'S WRONG, RICK?

THE DOOR-- WON'T OPEN!

IT'S GOT TO OPEN, YOU BUMBLING INCOMPETENT! PULL HARDER!

I AM TRYING, LOUDMOUTH! CAN'T YOU SEE?

THAT SLAMMING MUST HAVE-- JAMMED IT SOMEHOW!

THE WINDOWS! THAT'S HOW WE'LL GET OUT!

UNTHINKING--NOT WANTING TO WONDER WHY A STARK FEAR GROWS INSIDE THEM LIKE THE BREWING STORM OUTSIDE--THEY RUN TO THE WINDOWS, ONLY TO FIND--

BARS!!

WE'RE TRAPPED-- TRAPPED!

HAAHAAHAAHAAHAA

AND, ONCE AGAIN, THAT GRIM TRAVESTY OF LAUGHTER ECHOES THRU THE MOLDER HOUSE...ACCOMPANIED BY THE COLD CHILL OF FESTERING DESPAIR....!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

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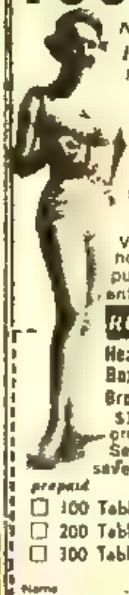

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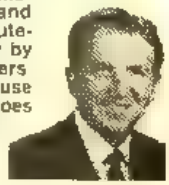

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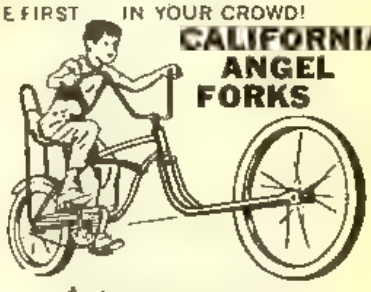

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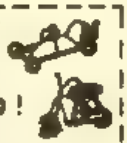

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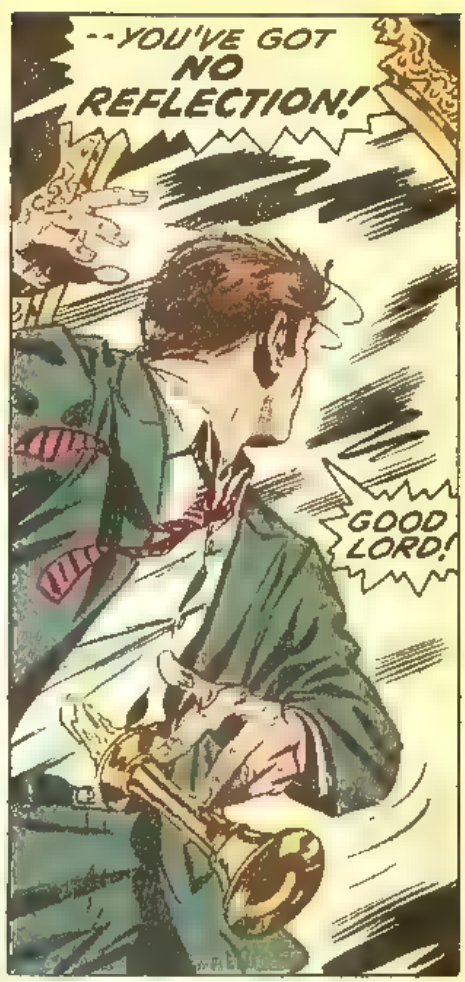
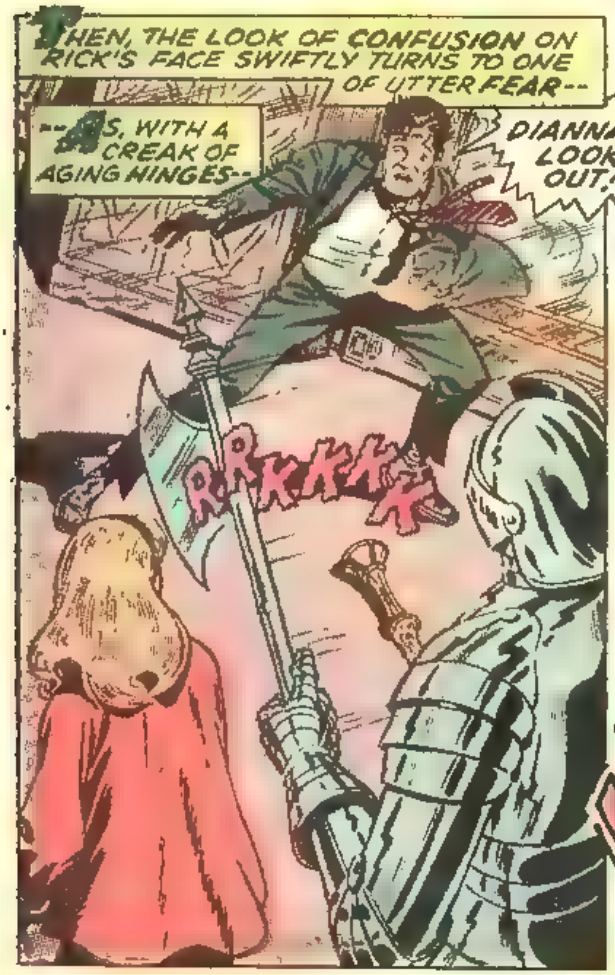
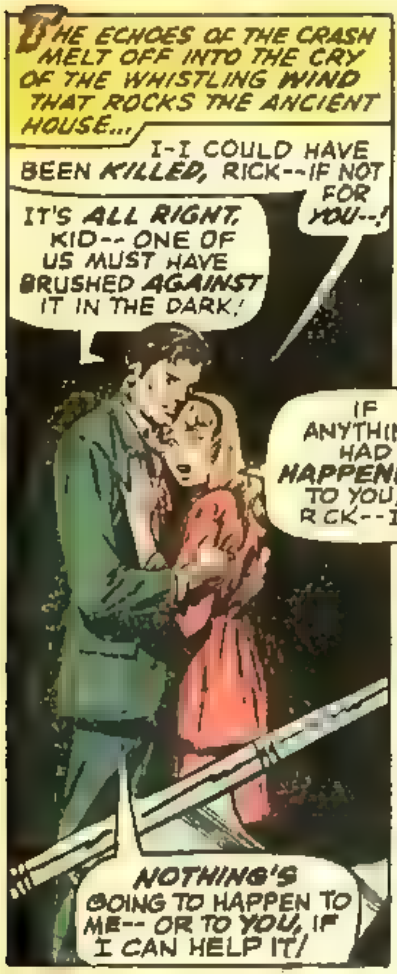
OH, RICK-- WHAT'LL WE DO?
WE'VE GOT TO GET TO UNCLE JAMESON'S BEFORE MORNING-- SHOW HIM THAT WE TRIED TO ATTEND HIS SEANCE--
OR WE'LL LOSE EVERY-THING!
EASY, DIANNA-- EASY!
UH OH! THAT GUST OF WIND MUST'VE BLOWN OUT THE CANDLES!

WELL, HERE'S ANOTHER ONE, SO AT LEAST--
WHAT'RE YOU LOOKIN' AT?
RICK - THAT MIRROR-- THE ONE BEHIND YOU--!


--YOU'VE GOT NO REFLECTION!
GOOD LORD!


THEN, THE LOOK OF CONFUSION ON RICK'S FACE SWIFTLY TURNS TO ONE OF UTTER FEAR--
--AS, WITH A CREAK OF AGING HINGES--
DIANNA-- LOOK OUT!
RRKKKK

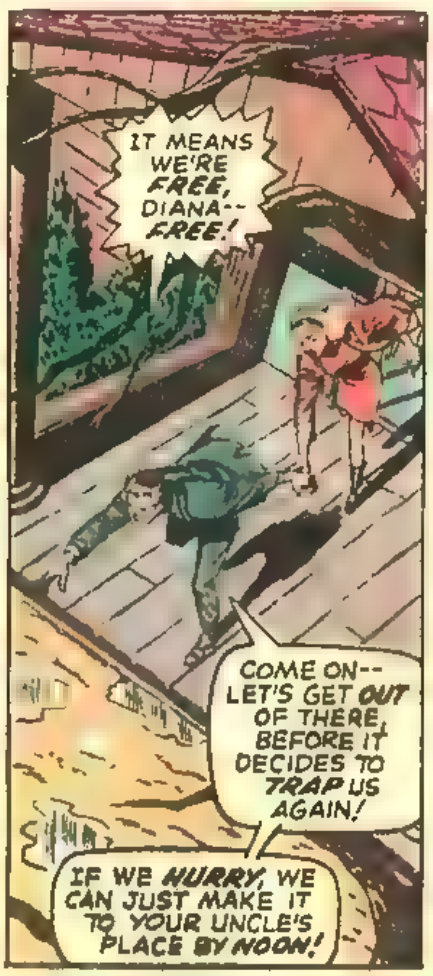
EEEEEEEEEE
KLANG!


THE ECHOES OF THE CRASH MELT OFF INTO THE CRY OF THE WHISTLING WIND THAT ROCKS THE ANCIENT HOUSE...
I-I COULD HAVE BEEN KILLED, RICK--IF NOT FOR YOU--!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, KID-- ONE OF US MUST HAVE BRUSHED AGAINST IT IN THE DARK!
IF ANYTHING HAD HAPPENED TO YOU, RICK--I--
NOTHING'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME-- OR TO YOU, IF I CAN HELP IT!

ONE THING'S CERTAIN! IF WE'RE NOT GOING TO GET OUT OF THIS HOUSE TONIGHT--
WE'LL JUST KEEP WATCHING--AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS COME MORNING!
AT LEAST WE'RE TOGETHER-- AND I NEVER KNEW HOW MUCH THAT MEANT TO ME-- TILL NOW!
IF ONLY THIS WERE A DREAM, RICK--FROM WHICH WE'D WAKE UP AT DAWN--!

BUT, IT IS NO DREAM...AND A NIGHT PASSES, A NIGHT FILLED WITH NAMELESS FEARS WHICH LURK ALWAYS AROUND THE NEXT CORNER! THEN, AT LAST--
LOOK, HONEY-- IT'S DAWN!!
AND THE STORM OUTSIDE STOPPED-- AS THE SUN CAME UP!
BUT--WE'RE STILL LOCKED IN! SO--

THEN, SUDDENLY, THE MOAN OF RICKETY, RUSTED HINGES, AND--
THE DOOR'S OPENING--BUT NO ONE'S THERE!
WH-WHAT DOES IT MEAN, DARLING? WHAT?


IT MEANS WE'RE FREE, DIANA-- FREE!
COME ON-- LET'S GET OUT OF THERE, BEFORE IT DECIDES TO TRAP US AGAIN!
IF WE HURRY, WE CAN JUST MAKE IT TO YOUR UNCLE'S PLACE BY NOON!

BUT, THAT'LL BE TOO LATE, RICK! WE WERE SUPPOSED TO BE THERE LAST NIGHT, AND--
RICK--THE CAR--!
IT'S GONE!!
SOMEBODY STOLE IT-- DURING THE STORM!

SOMEBODY MUST HAVE LOCKED US IN LAST NIGHT--AND TAKEN IT!

WELL, WE'LL WORRY ABOUT THAT LATER--AFTER WE HITCH A RIDE!

WE'VE GOT TO GET TO YOUR UNCLE'S SO HE DOESN'T CUT YOU OUT OF HIS WILL--THAT'S WHAT MATTERS!

YES... THAT'S WHAT MATTERS...!

THE RIDE TO HER UNCLE'S MANSION IS SHORT...BUT LONG ENOUGH FOR BOTH TO WONDER OVER UNANSWERED QUESTIONS! THEN...

RICK--THAT ISN'T TOM, UNCLE'S REGULAR GARDNER!

IN FACT, THE WHOLE PLACE LOOKS SOMEHOW--DIFFERENT!

I'LL SOON FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON HERE...!

...OLD MR. JAMESON? WHY, HE DIED--SEVEN YEARS AGO TODAY, IT WAS!

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HIS NIECE CLAUDIA'S BEEN RUNNIN' THE PLACE EVER SINCE...!

THE AGED GARDNER WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND WHY THE TWO YOUNG PEOPLE JUST STARED AT HIM IN STARK AMAZEMENT...THEN TURNED AWAY...!

SEVEN YEARS! WE LOST SEVEN YEARS--IN ONE NIGHT!

WE NOT ONLY LOST YOUR INHERITANCE--BUT WE'VE BEEN DECLARED LEGALLY DEAD BY NOW!

YOUR UNCLE DID IT SOMEHOW--I KNOW HE DID--BUT WHY?

DON'T YOU SEE, RICK? DON'T YOU SEE?

HE ALWAYS SAID HE WISHED HIS MAGIC COULD LEAVE US MORE THAN MONEY--LEAVE US WHAT WE REALLY WANTED!

YES--NOW I SEE--HE DID GIVE US WHAT WE WANTED MUCH MORE THAN MONEY--THOUGH WE DIDN'T KNOW IT!

WE MAY HAVE LOST THE MONEY--LOST SEVEN YEARS OF OUR LIVES--

--BUT WE FOUND--EACH OTHER!

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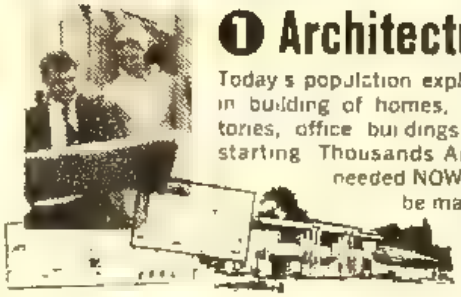

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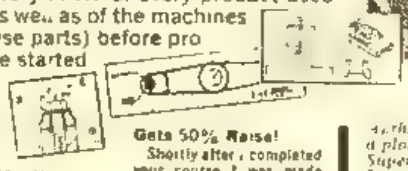

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MIGHTY MARVEL'S ON THE MOVE AGAIN!

AND WHEN WE SAY WE'RE ON THE MOVE AGAIN, WE'RE NOT JUST GARGLIN' HAMFAT, PEOPLE! HERE'S WHY—

ITEM! Let's start with the results of organized fandom's biggest popularity poll. The tallies of the 1969 Alley Awards are finally in, and it's almost embarrassing the way mighty Marvel copped most of the main honors. We figured you'd wanna share some of the excitement with us, so here's a brief recap of the way the voting went: BEST COMICS MAG. The FANTASTIC FOUR and SPIDER-MAN ran away with the two top honors, each getting more than twice the votes of its nearest rival BEST WAR TITLE: SGT. FURY (and his Whatchamacallems), winning by almost two-to-one. BEST EDITOR: Our own STAN LEE (for the umpteenth time). BEST WRITER: You guessed it — STAN THE MAN again and the biggest kick of all is the fact that RASCALLY ROY THOMAS was voted second choice in this category, showing how fandom's farflung frantic ones feel about our opulent opuses. BEST PENCIL ARTIST was JAUNTY JIM STERANKO, on the strength of the fabulous style and sophistication he has brought to so many Marvel strips — followed by last year's landslide winner, JOLLY JACK KIRBY, our own living legend, who's always the most potent threat in any comic art poll. BEST INKER: Who else but Marvel's JOLTIN' JOEY SINNOTT? We'll tell ya who else — WONDROUS WALLY WOOD grabbed second place — and you'll find W.W.'s artwork gracing our phantasmagoric pages once again. Well, we could go on and on, but you get the idea. Incidentally, if it sounds like we're bragging, you're right! But we're not bragging about us — it's YOU we're boasting about. After all, Marvel's titanic triumphs are nothing more than magnificent monuments to your own good taste!

ITEM! Now let's talk about new developments. BASHFUL BARRY SMITH'S returning to the States from merrie olde England to work on a new top-secret project for us. We can't spell it out just yet, but we've a hunch you're gonna call it mildly sensational!

ITEM! We're bringing out two new mags which will go on sale about May of this year. They're sure to remind you of some of Marvel's greatest experiments of the past although they'll be done in the latest, greatest dynamite styles of today, by none other than KIRBY, ROMITA, KANE, and HECK! And if that's not enough to whet your appetite

ITEM! We've inaugurated a new policy of guest-star appearances in our superhero spectaculars. Perhaps you've already noticed more and more guest appearances, such as the Human Torch being featured in the current SILVER SURFER #15, & the Sub-Mariner/Iron Man slugfest in Shellhead's latest ish! And that's only the beginning of a whole magilla of ideas and surprises we've got in store for lucky you, in the months to come!

ITEM! Well, we did it again. Here's the first paragraph of a letter poor Smiley just received from SHEL FELDNER of the drama dept. at the Univ. of California, Santa Cruz: "Oh Stan! What a terrible man you are! I have with great difficulty restrained an army of students from the University of California at SANTA CRUZ from marching on your office with burning pine knots and a hemp necktie. Why do they hunger for confrontation? Because you called their beloved Alma Mater the U. of Cal. at VERA CRUZ!" Luckily, Stan read on before abandoning all hope, and saw. " — I might mention that the Marvel Era continues at Santa Cruz. I am using your magazines for tryout material in the latest show I'm directing — they're really good for stimulating students." Many thanks, Shelly boy! For an endorsement like that, maybe it's worth making a bonehead blunder or two!

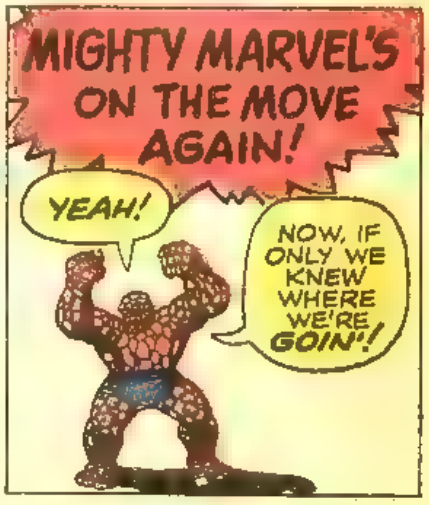
ITEM! If you haven't joined Marvelmania International yet, you're missing out on the jazziest color catalogue of superhero goodies you've ever drooled over! The original posters, shown in living color, are enough to make Jonah Jameson smile — and wait'll you latch onto the swingin' art kit with self-portraits of your favorite Marvel mad men! All that and more, more, more, for only 25¢ to cover postage and kickbacks! So kiss two-bits goodbye and rush it to MARVELMANIA INTERNATIONAL, P.O. Box 718, Culver City, Cal. 90230. 'Nuff said!

STAN'S SOAPBOX

Okay, students — it's lesson time again. So many of you have been asking how long it takes to produce one of our cataclysmic comics that I decided to take the easy way out and answer all of you at once — as a public service — and mainly 'cause I can't think of anything else to write about. As you know, we turn out an average of twenty merry masterworks a month, which boils down to about one complete book every working day. Naturally, that doesn't mean we write, draw, letter, and color a complete mag in a single day — even Irving Forbush couldn't do it. But, the work is done on a glorified, nervous-breakdown-inducing, production-line basis. We start a new title every day and take about a month till it reaches completion. If any one book is late, or if any writer or artist or anyone connected with the mag's production misses his deadline, it sets the whole kaboodle back like a set of falling dominos. Now then, if you completely understand any of this, drop us a line and explain it to me. And, whilst wallowing in our usual sea of confusion, I'll start preparing next month's Soapbox, which'll deal with the time it takes for the writer to do his writing, the letterer to do his lettering, and the artist to do his artisting. Then, when we're all done, this avalanche of erudite information is guaranteed to do you as much good as it does us. In other words —

Excelsior! Stan Lee

Don't worry, man!
THE MIGHTY MARVEL CHECKLIST
is on another page!



Tomes from the Tower!

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP, 625 MADISON AVE. N.Y.C. 10022

Dear Stan,

Congratulations on your new horror comics. The art and stories are far above the junk that some of your competitors turn out. Only one thing mars my joy though—the use of those idiotic narrators, Headstone P. Gravely and Digger. Those stories, in which Stan, or the author himself, narrated the tale, were much more pleasing. I hope in future issues to find Mr. Gravely's and Digger's absence.

Other suggestions; by all means keep Barry Smith on the macabre, it is his forte. Also, save the last story spot for adaptations as it is a great way to end the comic. With super heroes on the decline I hope that you will not limit your new publications to the weird. A well done S.F. comic would be greatly appreciated. You have said before that S.F. does not sell well. True, in the past it hasn't been as great an attraction as super heroes. But your circulation now is made up mostly of people who enjoy science fiction and fantasy. At least try this.

TALES TO ASTONISH, vol. 2, and TALES OF SUSPENSE, vol. 2, could showcase weird adventure, or mystery. Both are fields that have been little used in comics. Conan, a progenitor of weird-adventure fantasy has had great success, as has Ellery Queen, one of the greatest mystery characters of all time. Another title suggestion in the mystery category is Marvel Mystery.

In closing, I would like to say thank you for great comics and may the Falcon get his own book soon.

Till the Flames of the Faltine are fore'er extinguished.

Jaimes Markbam, 3 Madison Street
Cambridge, Mass. 02138

It'll take some puff of wind to put out those ever-lovin' Flames, Jaimes! Thanks for your suggestions, and we will keep them in mind. But, we don't want to commit ourselves publically to anything—which is our sneaky way of sayin' we're not sure WHAT we're gonna do next!

Also, by now it should be clear what the verdict of Marveldom Assembled was on Gravely and Digger, and also what our reaction was. Aren't you glad we're so easy to get along with?

Dear Stan,

TOWER OF SHADOWS #3 contained one of the most suspenseful stories I've ever read. "The Terrible Old Man", was beautiful, just beautiful. Not only in story (how could it be bad when H.P. Lovecraft was the writer), but the art!

Yes, Barry Smith has finally done it. I must admit, when Smith did one of the X-MEN, I thought he was a lousy artist, DAREDEVIL was no better, the AVENGERS was on the right track, but still not up to par. But this is a real masterpiece. This is Barry Smith's atmosphere, not superhero, but horror, suspense, and stories that grip you to your seat. I'm sure many other fans feel the same way, and I hope Smith does too.

Mike Rotblatt, 219 Homewood Rd.
Los Angeles, California 90049

We think the Bashful One agrees, Mike, but by now, you've seen a few other strings in Barry's bow: namely, "The Sword and the Sorceror," "The Warlock Tree," and this ish's The Monster that Destroyed Hollywood." Sure—Barry is fantastically good on the bizarre stories you find in TOWER and CHAMBER . . . but, after seeing some work he's doing on a project that has to stay secret for now . . . well, all we can say is WATCH OUT!

Dear Stan,

Congratulations on giving an almost excellent portrayal of H.P. Lovecraft's "The Terrible Old Man" in TOWER OF SHADOWS #5. I say almost excellent, because no one could possibly show visually all the horror that H.P.L. puts into his work.

I must thank you for introducing people to Howard Phillips Lovecraft. He has gone unknown and unsung for too long. (If you haven't noticed by now, I'm one of his biggest fans.)

If you think the world is ready for it, how about acquainting the rest of the world with some more of H.P.L.'s work? Stories you might consider are "The Haunter of the Dark," "The Thing on the Doorstep," "The Rats in the Walls," "In the Vault," and "The Outsider." There are many, many more where they came from, but I think those would be the easiest to illustrate.

If you think you can, why not try "The Call of Cthulhu?"

P.S. The artwork in "The Terrible Old Man" was very, very good! I really enjoyed it. In fact, I always enjoy TOWER OF SHADOWS. Keep up the good work!

Nancy Donahue, 1027 Duncan St.
Bronx, N.Y. 10469

We'll try, Nancy. Roy, Allyn Brodsky, and a few other Bullpeners have been HPL fans for some time, and we do hope to bring more masterpieces of the macabre by America's modern master of that genre to you in TOWER and CHAMBER. However, HPL was not writing for comics, and some of his stories would not be appropriate for comics. Still, we do intend to try to do more of his work, where we can do it as close to his original style and concepts as possible!

Dear Stan,

Allow me to be the first to congratulate you! You've finally done it! At long last you've actually printed in black and white the NAMES of your competitors! I personally thank you. It has been my wish to see this happen, and to see it in a Canadian letter—and, for that matter, to see MORE Canadian letters than domestic ones in a letters page has made my comics-induced bandruptcy bearable.

And you didn't even stop at one or two! Jim Allan's letter mentioned National twice, and Charlton and E.C. once each. The crowning feat was your own mention of E.C. However, they are not really long-dead, and won't be as long as someone is still MAD!

I just have one question: did you INTENTIONALLY misspell 'Charlton'??

Art Cooper, 8 Searle Ave.
Hamilton 50, Ont., Canada

NONE of our goofs are intentional, Art, only the attempts to correct them! But, sometimes we do wonder!

Just to get something straight, though, we've never made it a policy not to mention the names of our competitors, if readers write those names into our letters pages. The only time we eliminate such references is when the letter really goes a bit too far in attacking them. Then, we feel it's more polite to avoid printing such attacks.

KNOW YE THESE, THE HALLOWED RANKS OF MARVELDOM:

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T.T.B. (Titanic True Believer) — A divinely-inspired 'No-Prize' winner.

Q.N.S. (Quite 'Nuff Sayer) — A fortunate frantic one who's had a letter printed.

K.O.F. (Keeper Of the Flame) — One who recruits a newcomer to Marvel's rollickin' ranks.

P.M.M. (Permanent Marvelite Maximus) —Anyone possessing all four of the other titles.

F.F.F. (Fearless Front-Facer) — An honorary title bestowed for devotion to Marvel above and beyond the call of duty.

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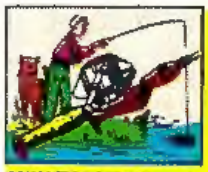
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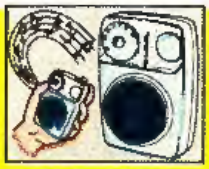
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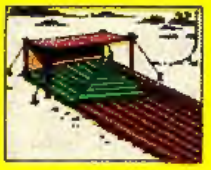
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BASKETBALL & GOAL

I sold over 500 packs and earned a bicycle.
David Peterson
Michigan

Customers like American Seeds. That's why it's so easy to sell them.
Gloria Forsyth
Florida

I've earned three prizes and money. American Seeds are great.
Don Bullard
Washington

MAKE MONEY
GET PRIZES
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Take your choice of 100 wonderful prizes. You can earn as many as you want. Most prizes shown here and many more in our Big Prize Book are given WITHOUT COST for selling just one 48-pack order of American Vegetable and Flower Seeds at 25¢ a pack. Some of the larger prizes require more sales or extra money as explained in the Big Prize Book.

Send NO MONEY, We Trust You

Everybody wants American Seeds. They're fresh and ready to grow. You'll sell them quickly to family, friends and neighbors. Many boys and girls sell their packs in one day. You can too — and get your prize at once. Or, if you want money instead of a prize, keep $4.00 for every 48-pack order you sell.

USE THESE COUPONS ONLY

To order your seeds, fill out one of *these* coupons and mail in an envelope to:

AMERICAN SEED CO.
Dept. 046
Lancaster, Pa. 17604
OUR 52nd YEAR

MAIL ONE COUPON TODAY
Give the Other to a Friend

AMERICAN SEED CO., Dept. 046, Lancaster, Pa. 17604

Please send me your Big Prize Book and one order of 48 packs of American Seeds. I'll sell them at 25¢ a pack, send you the money and choose my prize. Send seeds checked.

☐ All Flower Seeds ☐ Mixed Vegetable and Flower Seeds

Name_____

Address_____

Town_____ State_____ Zip Code_____

AMERICAN SEED CO., Dept. 046, Lancaster, Pa. 17604

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Name_____

Address_____

Town_____ State_____ Zip Code_____

EXTRA!

$3,000 GIVEN AWAY in our Promptness Contest in addition to the prizes and money you earn selling seeds.

Complete information is sent with your Big Prize Book and Seeds.

SAVE FOR COLLEGE or SPEND IT NOW!